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**Environment Department Orders Cleanup of Hazardous Materials, Debris at  
Los Alamos Airport Landfill**

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) today issued a Compliance Order to Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) requiring the clean up of hazardous materials and debris in drainages at the Airport Landfill located on Route 502 in Los Alamos. These drainages discharge to Pueblo Canyon and, ultimately, the Rio Grande.

Soils in the drainages contain elevated levels of potentially toxic substances, including cesium, plutonium, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), pesticides and lead. Tires, car bodies, construction debris, trashcans, scrap metal, wood, 55-gallon drums and various other types of waste also litter the drainages. Alarming, though most of these drums are now empty, what they once held is not known. The site has no erosion controls to prevent contaminated soils from reaching the Rio Grande, nor is the site fenced to restrict public access.

“The Environment Department is serious about LANL becoming a responsible environmental citizen,” said NMED Deputy Secretary Derrith Watchman-Moore. “I hope that this Order sends a strong signal that the days of repeated extensions, investigations that never end, and waste that is allowed to remain unaddressed, are over.”

LANL has been investigating the site since 1994. Beginning in 1999, NMED began a collaborative effort with DOE and the University of California to design an effective cleanup strategy for the site. Although the effort culminated in a plan for cleanup in 2001, DOE withdrew its support for the remedy. DOE has not submitted an acceptable alternative plan to NMED since.

NMED’s Order requires LANL to remove the debris from the Airport Landfill drainages by August, 2003, conduct confirmatory sampling once the debris is removed, and install erosion controls to stabilize the drainages. Based on results of the removal and sampling activities, NMED may require the Laboratory to conduct additional activities at the site to protect human

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health and the environment. The Order also penalizes LANL a total of \$167,475.00, for its failure to clean up the site and submit an adequate cleanup plan.

The Airport Landfill is located on U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) property at the Los Alamos County Airport, and was operated by DOE beginning in 1943 for the disposal of waste from the Town of Los Alamos and LANL laboratory operations.

LANL is a contractor-operated research facility under the administration of the United States Department of Energy that has been in operation since the early 1940's. Throughout its history, LANL has conducted experimental research on development of nuclear weapons and explosive materials. From approximately 1943 to the present, various hazardous and mixed radioactive wastes have been generated, stored, treated and disposed of at LANL. Hazardous and solid wastes that historically have been handled and disposed of include chlorinated and non-chlorinated solvents, high explosives, metals, PCBs, pesticides, perchlorate and nitrates.

For further information, please contact James Bearzi, Chief, Hazardous Waste Bureau, NMED at (505) 428-2512 or Jon Goldstein, NMED Communication Director at (505) 827-0314.

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